

September 17, 2001

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Lake H. Barrett, Acting Director  
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management  
U.S. Dept. of Energy  
PO Box 30307  
North Las Vegas, NV 89036

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SEP 20 2001

Reference: Providing Comments Re: Federal Register notice (66 FR 43850)  
Yucca Mountain Site Suitability

Dear Mr. Barrett,

Thank you for your letter requesting comments regarding the proposed use of Yucca Mountain as a site for the nation's high level radioactive waste. Listed below are the areas of concern that I have with the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, the DOE's analysis of the suitability of Yucca Mountain, and the Secretary's up-coming recommendation to the president.

- 1) The Nuclear Waste Policy Act and the DOE's preparation of environmental and other assessments of Yucca Mountain in lieu of the Act, is inherently flawed because it has resulted in the DOE focusing exclusively on Yucca Mountain, contradicting federal law that requires environmental assessments to include alternatives other than no-action. DOE has spent billions of dollars trying to demonstrate that Yucca Mountain is a good place for the nations high level radioactive waste and the lack of a provision for the assessment of alternatives has meant that all of that money that DOE has spent on Yucca Mountain has been invested without the benefit of any sort of reference point from which case study comparisons can be made that might demonstrate that Yucca Mountain is any better or any worse than any other potential site in the nation.
- 2) DOE's assessment of Yucca Mountain has proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that the volcanic geology of Yucca Mountain, coupled with the hydrology of the area, does not provide a scientific basis from which it can be concluded that Yucca Mountain could or would guarantee any sort of isolation of radioactive material that might escape its original containment vessel. In fact, given the porous, fissure and fault strewn nature of the Yucca Mountain geology, it can easily be argued that the only thing going for the mountain as a potential site for the nations high level radioactive waste, is the mountain's present isolation from human development and habitation.
- 3) Given #1 and #2 above, and recent DOE suggestions that the department is now relying on the robustness of the containment vessels for providing long term isolation of the nation's high level radioactive wastes, (the DOE is apparently now implying that the geology of where we keep the stuff doesn't matter), the DOE and the federal government should immediately amend the Nuclear Waste Policy Act to include the assessment of alternatives to Yucca Mountain.

4) It is unconscionable, if not illegal, for the federal government and the DOE to propose to adopt a policy in which the government plans to abandon the high level radioactive waste storage site once it is full, thereby washing its hands of any responsibility for a material that remains highly toxic for thousands of years. Only a plan that provides for non-stop oversight, monitoring and management, and which is funded at a level appropriate to its requirements, is acceptable in this case.

5) That the proposed Yucca Mountain storage site would be completely filled once all of the nation's presently existing high level radioactive material is shipped to and stored at the site, the federal government and DOE would be completely remiss if it does not require a cessation of the production of any more high level radioactive waste. Or is it an unspoken part of the government's plan that because DOE would be providing a storage site for the existing waste, that this would provide for the continuing operation of nuclear reactors, specifically, those owned and operated by private utilities, because it would provide for a freeing-up of room at the storage and cooling pools where the existing material is presently stored? With the added result that the provision would allow the aging fleet of the nation's nuclear power plants, which, due to their inherent obsolescence coupled with the increasing danger of operating these reactors past their engineered life span, should in reality be in the process of being phased out?

These are my comments regarding the proposed use of Yucca Mountain as the nation's high level nuclear waste storage site. Thank you for your consideration, and please let me know of other activities and actions regarding the disposition of the Yucca Mountain proposal.

Sincerely,



Andrew D. Morin

cc: Andrew Remus, Inyo County Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Depository Assessment Office.